

Brown Nieces and Nephews in an All-White World

Gender and Genre in Dutch Children's Novels about the Dutch East Indies, 1890-1930

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This article discusses children's novels about Eurasian children who were sent from the Dutch East Indies to the Netherlands for the purpose of character reformation. The corpus shows a remarkable dominance of girl characters, while in actual practice it was mostly Eurasian boys who were sent away for secondary education. I explain this discrepancy between literary text and socio-historical context through the shaping influence of literary genre – that is, of the tomboy story in this particular case. This deflection largely invalidates colonial children's novels as reliable sources of information about historical educative practices, but it makes them all the more informative regarding the attitudes and values that drove these practices. I conclude by observing that these attitudes and values were anything but homogeneous or coherent, but allowed for a certain bandwidth of variation, which undercuts stark contrasts between colonisers and colonised.

Dit artikel bespreekt kinderboeken over Indo-Europese kinderen die vanuit Nederlands-Indië naar Nederland werden gestuurd met het oog op karaktervorming. Opvallend genoeg spelen meisjes het vaakst de hoofdrol in deze romans, terwijl het in werkelijkheid vooral Indo-Europese jongens waren die naar Nederland werden gestuurd voor middelbaar onderwijs. Ik verklaar deze discrepantie tussen literaire tekst en sociaal-historische context vanuit de sturende rol van literaire genre-conventies, in dit specifieke geval, van de zogenaamde 'bakvis roman'. De dominantie van literaire genres diskwalificeert koloniale kinderliteratuur als een betrouwbare bron over historische opvoedkundige

praktijken, maar het maakt ze des te informatiever waar het de houdingen en waarden betreft die ten grondslag lagen aan deze praktijken. Ik concludeer dat deze houdingen en waarden allesbehalve samenhangend of homogeen waren, maar een grote onderlinge variatie vertonen, wat het idee van een scherpe tegenstelling tussen kolonisator en gekoloniseerde ondergraaft.

Literary geographies of childhood

If we want to retrieve obsolete Dutch discourses on the re-allocation and re-education of Indies children, it makes sense to return to the time when these were still out in the open as expressions of national pride and imperial propaganda. This brings us back to the period in which the Ethical Policy (*ethische politiek*) transformed the governance of the Dutch East Indies (1890-1930).¹ The separation of mixed and indigenous children from their birth families and communities was embedded in educative and propagandistic discourses that aimed to garner support from missionary and humanitarian societies and from the home front at large. Some of these discourses expressly targeted metropolitan children. It is a meaningful coincidence that the Ethical Policy was proclaimed by the Dutch government in 1901, the same year in which compulsory education for Dutch children between six and twelve was introduced into the Netherlands. This opened up the opportunity to address the whole of Dutch youth. While Indies children of colour were to be raised to a higher level of civilisation, Dutch children had to be persuaded of the righteousness of this endeavour, since concern with bettering the local population increased the demand for colonial officials, and the idea took hold among Dutch educators that one could not begin recruiting the next generation early enough², motivating them to take up the white man's burden

1 It is hard to fix precise dates for the Ethical Policy, but it is generally agreed that colonial attitudes changed significantly during the later decades of the nineteenth century, while the condescending benevolence towards Indies nations that formed the basis of this policy began to erode in the course of the twentieth century, when the Dutch government increasingly focused on suppressing the nationalist movements that took the promise of eventual independence implied in the Ethical Policy quite literally. See Jeroen Touwen, 'Paternalisme en protest: Ethische Politiek en nationalisme in Nederlands-Indië, 1900-1942', *Leidschrift* 15:3 (2000) 67-94; Berteke Waaldijk and Susan Legêne, 'Ethische politiek in Nederland:

Cultureel burgerschap tussen overheersing, opvoeding en afscheid', in: Marieke Bloemwegen and Remco Raben (eds.), *Het koloniale beschavingsoffensief: Wegen naar het nieuwe Indië 1890-1950* (Leiden 2009) 187-216.

2 See Dick Rozing, *Nederlands-Indië: Door de ogen van het verleden: De eerste aardrijkskundige fotoplaten van Nederlands-Indië, 1912-1913* (Amersfoort/Oegstgeest 2014) 8-28, a passage which quotes contemporary educators, government officials and captains of industry who all underlined the need to recruit Dutch youth for employment in the Dutch East Indies at the earliest possible opportunity.

in due course. Children's novels, magazines, reading primers and history and geography textbooks were to pique the interest of Dutch youth in the colonies and to warm their hearts to overseas civilising offensives, including the reformation of indigenous and mixed children. Hence Ann Stoler's claim that 'in colony and metropole, parenting practices and education were key political issues on the reformist agenda'³, placing children 'at the center of social policy as they had never been before'.⁴

This article maps a literary childhood geography⁵ specific to the Dutch empire, namely children's stories about the displacement of Eurasian children to the Netherlands for the purposes of character reformation and/or education. This theme was quite prominent in Dutch children's literature between 1890 and 1930.⁶ As we shall see, these fictional narratives partly converged with and partly diverged from the real-life mobilities of Eurasian children as they moved from colony to metropole and back again. This article studies how the fictional representation of child mobility within the colonial context is deflected by the narrative conventions of literary genres. This deflection largely invalidates colonial children's novels as reliable sources of information about historical educative practices, but it makes them all the more informative regarding the attitudes and values that drove these practices. For the most effective way to find out how a society thinks about specific groups is to examine the ideals it imparts to the next generation. I take my lead from cultural and literary history rather than book history⁷, as my aim is to identify the genre conventions of the novels under study and the values and attitudes they imply, to learn how Dutch children were persuaded to follow up on the moral improvement of people of colour in due course.

3 Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley 2002) 117.

4 Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge*, 120.

5 Satadru Sen, 'A Juvenile Periphery: The Geographies of Literary Childhood in Colonial Bengal', *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 5:1 (2004). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/cch.2004.0039>.

6 Archivist Dorothee Buur was the first scholar to alert me to the prominence of this theme in Dutch juvenile fiction about the Dutch East Indies in the introduction to her annotated bibliography: 'Aan het einde van de negentiende eeuw komt de stroom verhalen op gang over Hollandse en Indo-Europese kinderen die voor hun opvoeding en schoolopleiding naar Holland worden

gestuurd'. Dorothee Buur, *Indische jeugdliteratuur: Geannoteerde bibliografie van jeugdboeken over Nederlands-Indië en Indonesië 1825-1991* (Leiden 1992) 14. This bibliography is my main resource for selecting relevant primary texts, in combination with the Central Database of Children's Books (Centraal Bestand Kinderboeken) of the Royal Dutch Library (Koninklijke Bibliotheek) in The Hague. See the appendix on pages 206-207 for a list of the primary texts discussed in this article.

7 Consequently, my approach differs significantly from the work of a historian such as Hugh Morrison, who has published extensively on colonial children's literature in New Zealand, providing ample data about publishers, media, formats, and authors, but he hardly dwells on the literary, fictional aspects of his research object.

Turn-of-the-century Dutch children's fiction was strongly gendered.⁸ Both sexes were treated to moralising colonial novels, but in different ways. Some subgenres primarily catered to boys⁹, and others to girls.¹⁰ A third category addressed both sexes. Often, the intended audience was identified in the subtitle. The idea behind the partitioning of the reading audience was that boys and girls were to occupy different positions within the empire eventually. Women were to uphold middle-class ideals of domesticity, at both the centre and the periphery of empire, while men were to bring the light of civilisation into the 'darkest recesses' of the outlandish 'wilderness'. Accordingly, boys were treated to stories about exploration, adventure and conquest¹¹, while girls were graced with domestic fiction and the school story.¹²

Where Dutch girls were concerned, stories about so-called brown nieces (*bruine nichtjes*) must have been highly popular at the time, judging by the number of colonial novels that featured this particular type of character in the period under study, even drawing best-selling Dutch authors into its orbit such as Top Naeff, Cornélie Noordwal and Marie van Zeggelen. These novels narrate how daughters of mixed parentage are torn from their indigenous mothers and nannies, to be entrusted to relatives in the Netherlands around the age of nine. Sometimes their travel abroad is compelled by necessity – for example, because they are orphaned. On other occasions, it is caused by the pedagogical

- 8 Bea Ros and Sofie De Jonckheere, 'Een geval apart: Meisjes- en jongensboeken', in: Rita Ghesquière, Vanessa Joosen and Helma van Lierop-Debrauwer (eds.), *Een land van waan en wijs: Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse jeugdliteratuur* (Amsterdam/Antwerp 2014) 280-311; *Literatuur zonder leeftijd* 23:80 (2009). See also Beverly Lyon Clarks and Margaret Higonnet (eds.), *Girls, Boys, Books, Toys: Gender in Children's Literature and Culture* (Baltimore 1999).
- 9 Martin Burgess Green, *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire* (London 1980); Jeffrey Richards (ed.), *Imperialism and Juvenile Literature* (Manchester 1989); Joseph Bristow, *Empire Boys: Adventures in a Man's World* (London 1991).
- 10 Jacqueline Susan Bratton, 'Heroines of Empire: British Imperialism and the Reproduction of Femininity in Girls' Fiction, 1900-1930', in: Dudley Jones and Tony Watkins (eds.), *A Necessary Fantasy? The Heroic Figure in Children's Popular*

- Culture* (New York 2000) 207-229; Michelle J. Smith, *Empire in British Girls' Literature and Culture: Imperial Girls, 1880-1915*. Critical Approaches to Children's Literature (New York 2011). DOI: <http://doi.org/10.1057/9780230308121>; Kristine Moruzi and Michelle J. Smith (eds.), *Colonial Girlhood in Literature, Culture and History, 1840-1950* (New York 2014). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137356352>; Michelle J. Smith, Kristine Moruzi and Clare Bradford, *From Colonial to Modern: Transnational Girlhood in Canadian, Australian and New Zealand Children's Literature, 1840-1940* (Toronto 2018).
- 11 Seth Lerer, *Children's Literature: A Reader's History, from Aesop to Harry Potter* (Chicago 2008) 151-171.
- 12 Mavis Reimer, 'Traditions of the School Story', in: Mathew O. Grenby and Andrea Immel (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Children's Literature* (Cambridge 2009) 209-226. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL9780521868198.013>.

preferences of their white fathers, who feel their daughters need to be subjected to ‘proper’ child-rearing methods, which they apparently consider to be lacking in the Dutch East Indies. The parenting skills of Asian mothers and nannies are categorically disqualified in these works of fiction on account of their overall moral laxity. They are put on the scene as too lenient and permissive by far, giving in to each and every whim of their daughters. Unsurprisingly so, since they are judged to be incapable of controlling their own urges and inclinations in the first place, with the result that their daughters are spoiled rotten and supposedly stand in need of a stringent corrective. Eurasian girls are generally portrayed as deficient in the virtues of self-control, honesty and empathy. The stereotype has it that they are only aware of their own needs and desires, and that they cannot but follow these blindly, just like their mothers.¹³

A significant number of novels about Eurasian girls in Dutch settings display a similar plot.¹⁴ Dutch families accommodating nieces from the East Indies often pride themselves on a (usually blonde and blue-eyed) daughter of roughly the same age as the niece from the Dutch East Indies. These white cousins personify the standard against which the Eurasian girls are measured. Although the latter ‘improve’ during their stay in the Netherlands, they still fall short of the standard embodied by their blonde, blue-eyed counterparts. This is explained through the assumption that Eurasian girls are naturally disadvantaged, as the following dialogue between a ‘brown niece’ and her ‘white aunt’ clearly reveals, with Phientje impersonating the role of the Dutch counterpart in *Het Indische nichtje* by Tine de Kruijff-Gobius:

‘Aunt, I hope you don’t mind my saying so, but don’t you think it is a lot easier for other children such as Phientje to be always good than it is for me? Phientje just happens to be a lot more composed and much less prone to fly into a rage than I am.’

‘Yes, sure, that certainly is the case,’ aunt admitted, ‘but you also have to realise that a child that has less to contend with in herself has to meet higher expectations!’¹⁵

13 This image of Eurasian femininity in Dutch children’s literature conflates two stereotypes that circulated in Dutch colonial literature at large, namely: (a) the egocentric, materialist Indies mother who only has eyes for her own needs and pleasures and gladly leaves her children in the care of others; and (b) the smothering, doting Indies mother who cannot discipline her own emotions and inevitably spoils her children. See Petra Boudewijn, *Warm bloed: De representatie van Indo-Europeanen in de Indisch-Nederlandse letterkunde (1860-heden)*. Literatoren (Hilversum

2016) 200-206. Children’s literature figures the smothering Eurasian mother, but the girls portrayed are more diverse, some embodying the egotistic, materialistic stereotype, and others the warm-hearted, impulsive type. The stereotypes overlap, of course, in the lack of control over passionate impulses.

14 To be precise, numbers 6, 7, 10, 13, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28 and 31 from the appendix.

15 Tine de Kruijff-Gobius, *Het Indische nichtje* (Amsterdam 1900) 17: “‘Tante, U moet ‘t niet gek vinden, maar vindt U ‘t voor andere

A variation on the assumption that Eurasian girls are naturally disadvantaged is the performance of an attitude one could qualify as racist anti-racism, a script that is particularly prominent in Protestant Sunday School books such as *Het Oostersche nichtje: Een Paaschverhaal* (1909, *The Niece from the East: An Easter Story*). This one features a nine-year-old Eurasian girl Nanny, who is introduced as follows in the opening pages of the novel through the eyes of a girl called Clara, the blonde, blue-eyed counterpart of this work: ‘She had a broad, flat, yellowish-brown face, rather fat lips, a pair of beautiful dark eyes, and an abundance of black curls’.¹⁶ This description of Nanny’s looks contains the pedagogical challenge she poses to her Dutch relatives in a nutshell. She is clearly a ‘mixed’ girl, sporting ‘brutal’ features that were associated with bestial ugliness on the one hand, and refined features of delicate female beauty on the other. Such an ambivalent creature seems to be capable of developing into an angel or an animal – all depending on her upbringing, of course. This raises a narrative interest in how she will turn out.¹⁷

Initially, Nanny has a hard time adjusting to her all-white environment, where she is teased continually because of her skin colour. These racist quips are presented by the narrator as perfectly innocent jokes that Nanny should be able to put up with as a good sport. Sadly, she is not, flying into a rage over the ‘slightest’ provocation. However, things brighten up when Nanny believes she has chanced upon a ‘cure’ for her skin colour while eavesdropping on a conversation between the servant girls. The servants make each other (and Nanny) believe that ‘Easter water’, to be

kinderen, voor Phientje bijvoorbeeld, niet veel gemakkelijker om altijd lief te zijn dan voor mij? Phientje is nu eenmaal veel kalmer dan ik, en die wordt lang zoo gauw niet boos?”. “Ja zeker, dat is wel zoo,” gaf mevrouw toe, “maar je moet bedenken, van een kind dat minder moeite met zichzelf heeft, wordt ook weer meer geëischt!”

16 Elisabeth de Heer, *Het Oostersche nichtje* (Nijkerk 1909) 6: ‘Ze had een breed, plat, geelachtig-bruin gezichtje, nogal dikke lippen, een paar mooie donkere ooggen, en een overvloed van zwart krullend haar’.

17 This ambivalence explains the obsession with Eurasian (rather than indigenous) characters in Dutch colonial (children’s) fiction. Eurasians were perceived as highly volatile factors that befuddled the hierarchy and stability of colonial society. If they were acknowledged by their white fathers, they would be categorised as ‘Europeans’

and count among the colonisers. But if this did not happen, they would count as ‘inlanders’, likely to share the pauperism of the indigenous population, no matter how dark or fair their skin might have turned out to be. Contemporaneous racial taxonomies enhanced the perceived instability of mixed people, suggesting that they might reproduce the genetic heritage of one ancestor only, for better or for worse, or combine traits of both ancestors – virtues from their white fathers, and vices from their coloured mothers – as seems to be the case here. Thus, Eurasians spoke to both hopes for successful civilising projects and to widespread metropolitan fears of degeneration and the eventual dissolution of empire. See Boudewijn, *Warm bloed*, 63-94. Given that ‘anything may happen’ when Eurasian characters appear on the scene, they have great narrative potential.



▲
Annie de Graaff-Wüppermann, *Roetmop*, page 15. Illustrator: Ina Rahusen. Because it is challenging to visualise the purportedly brown skin colour of Eurasian children in black-white illustration, the illustrator has attributed features generally associated with black people to the Eurasian girl, such as curly hair and a black skin colour, in keeping with her nickname 'Roetmop' ('sootface'), a derogatory term for black people.

gathered from the brook before the break of dawn on Easter Day, has the power of bleaching your skin.

Determined to try this for herself, Nanny sets out on Easter morning to procure the magic substance. Unfortunately, she breaks the jar on her way back home. While she is sobbing uncontrollably over this mishap, a minister happens to pass by. He consoles Nanny by pointing out that skin colour is unimportant. It is the colour of your heart that matters. It has to be white, and this can be achieved through prayer, a much more effective 'cure' than magic potions as far as the minister is concerned. He teaches Nanny slightly adapted lines from the prayer which King David prayed after his adultery with Bathsheba, whose husband he had sent into a sure death on the battlefield: 'Give me a pure heart, o Lord, wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow'.¹⁸

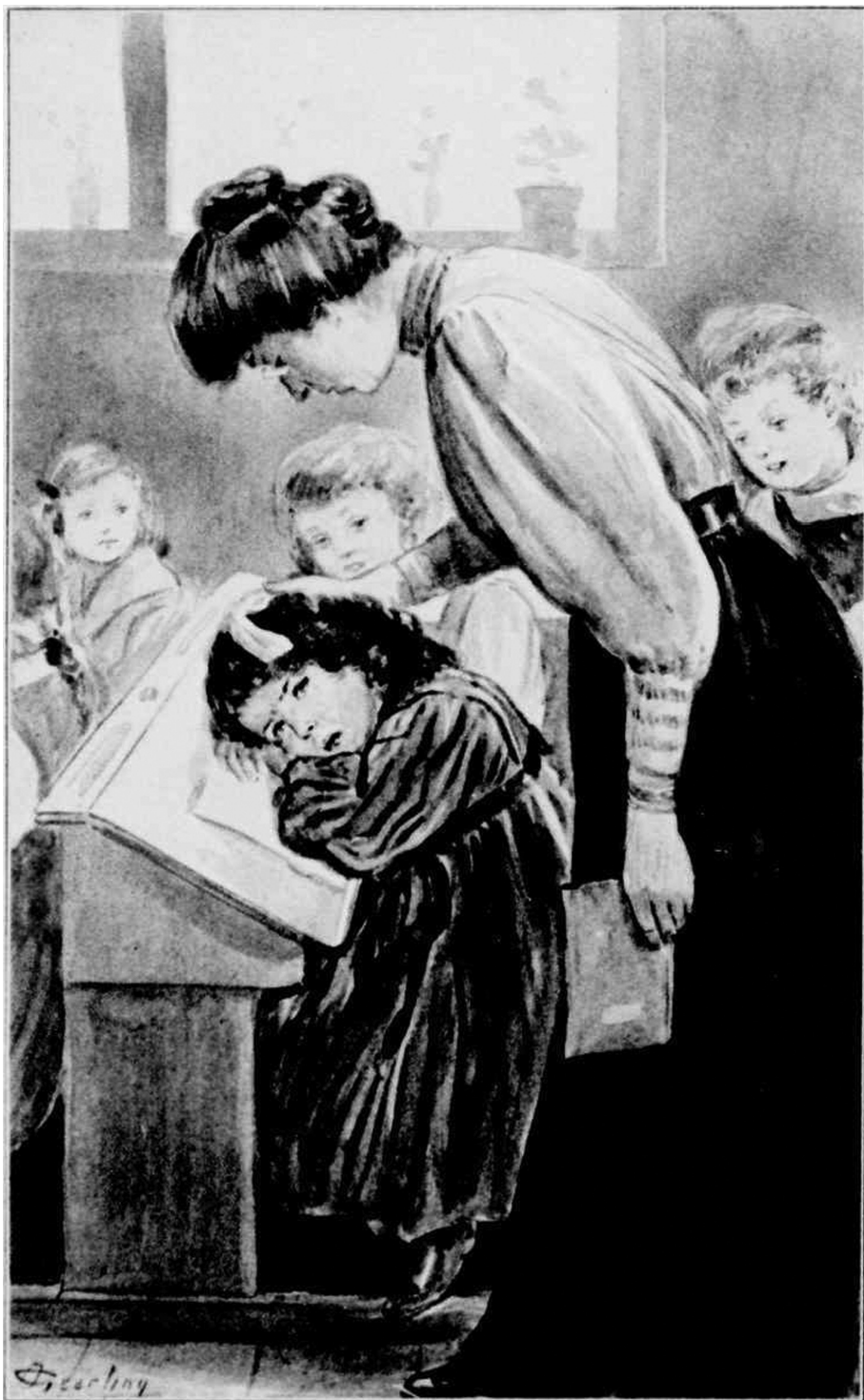
Reading between the lines, one may notice that it is tacitly suggested that a nine-year-old brown girl is as burdened with sin as an almighty king guilty of adultery and manslaughter. Even though skin colour is said to be unimportant, the implicit message is that having brown skin is sinful per se, an idea that is reinforced by the colour symbolism in the novel, which links virtue to whiteness, meaning that persons of colour are disadvantaged here. After her encounter with the minister, Nanny transforms from a burden into a blessing in the eyes of her Dutch relatives. After conversion, she becomes an instrument of conversion for the maidservants. Nanny even rises above her station by teaching Clara the value of prayer, something that Clara had never done much before, as she is supposedly good by nature and, therefore, does not have to work as hard at it as Nanny.

Although Nanny now manages to fit into her all-white Dutch environment, her transformation remains somewhat incomplete, as the conclusion to the novel points out: 'Well, she was not perfect all of a sudden. Her old nature had a way of resurfacing. But then she did what the minister had advised her to do'.¹⁹ That is: praying for whitewashing. It sure takes a lot of praying to stay Nanny's course on the straight and narrow path, as opposed to Clara, who is inclined by nature to walk the moral high road. With reference to Homi Bhabha's theory of 'colonial mimicry', one could say that these Eurasian girls become almost white/but not quite, during their stay in the Netherlands.²⁰

18 'Geef mij een rein hart, was mij, en ik zal witter zijn dan sneeuw', De Heer, *Het Oostersche nichtje*, 26. This phrase is a slightly simplified quote from Psalm 51 of the Psalms of King David: 'Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow; ... Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me ...', English Standard Version.

19 'Wel, ze was niet opeens volmaakt. Haar oude natuur kwam nog maar al te dikwijls boven. Maar dan deed ze wat Dominee haar geraden had', De Heer, *Het Oostersche nichtje*, 47.

20 Homi Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse', *October* 28 (1984) 125-133. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/778467>.



▲
Marie Caroline Frank, *Bruintje: Een verhaal voor meisjes* (Amsterdam [1910]). Illustrator: O. Geerling. title plate.
https://www.dbnl.org/tekst/frano13brui01_01/.

There is also the incidental divergence from this plot in the novels under study. In a (much smaller) group of narratives, it is not the brown nieces but their Dutch relatives who have to bear the brunt of the narrator's criticism.²¹ Take Marie Carolina Frank's *Bruintje: Een verhaal voor meisjes* (1910), for example. It features (Hilde)Gonda, daughter of a Dutch landowner and an upper-class Javanese mother, who travels to the Netherlands as a nine-year old together with her father, after the death of her mother. Shortly after they have moved in with a rather humble branch of the family, Gonda's father dies as well, leaving her alone with the lower-class Janssen family. While she is treated kindly by father Janssen, his protection vanishes when he falls ill and loses his wits, while her second protector, son Gerard Janssen, departs for a career at sea. This leaves Gonda at the mercy of mother Janssen, a low and mean character, who embezzles Gonda's heritage and exploits her ruthlessly.

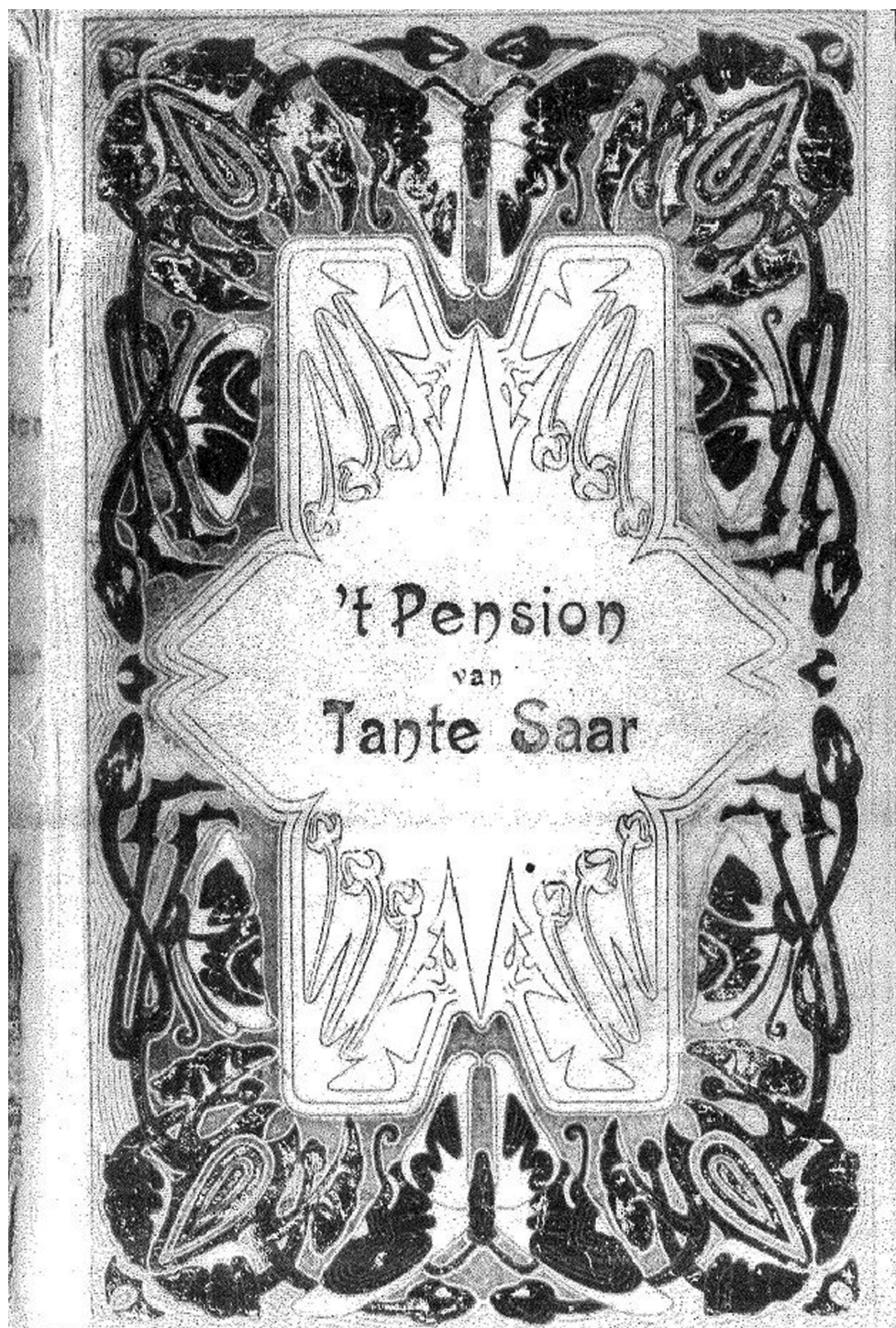
Notwithstanding these trials and tribulations, Gonda displays none of the traits usually attributed to Eurasian girls. She works hard, studying to become a schoolteacher and running the Janssen household in the meantime, retaining the overall nobility of character that she has inherited from her mother. High social standing and nobility of character go hand in hand here²², while the reverse also applies, most notably to mother Janssen, who combines low social standing with glaring moral deficiency. Mother Janssen's misbehaviours all come to light shortly before she dies of the injuries she incurred because her good-for-nothing son Jan had accidentally set the house on fire. She confesses it all to Gonda, bitterly regretting her evil ways. Eventually, the boundaries of both race and class are transcended when it is subtly suggested in the concluding pages that Gonda and Gerard, the only truly honourable person to have come out of the Janssen family, have fallen in love with each other.

Another exception to the rule of white supremacy is provided by Clémence Bauer's *Twee Adri's* (1929). Here, the normal situation is inverted, since the Adri from the Netherlands is portrayed as morally inferior to the Indies Adri. Dutch Adri has to learn how hurtful the racist quips she inflicted on Indies Adri really are, in stark contrast to *Het Oostersche nichtje*, where such quips are presented as innocent child's play. Finally, the research corpus (see note 6) contains a rare work in which a Dutch guardian, her brown ward and a group of Dutch girls live together harmoniously on an equal footing: Augusta van Slooten's *'t Pension van Tante Saar* (1909).

21 See also numbers 3, 5 and 9 from the appendix.

22 Here, again, we may witness the colonisers' fascination with Javanese *priyayi* families, described at length by Kirsten Kamphuis' article 'An Alternative Family: An Elite Christian Girls' School on Java in a Context of Social Change,

c. 1907-1939', in this special issue 'Child Separation: (Post)Colonial Policies and Practices in the Netherlands and Belgium', *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review* 135:3/4 (2020) 4-28. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18352/bmgn-lchr.10870>.



▲
The cover of Augusta van Slooten, *'t Pension van Tante Saar* (1909). Illustrator: Jan Sluytens.

The leading character, a Dutch woman called Sara Joostink, is an orphan herself and loses her husband and child at the age of 28. She learns to transcend her own sufferings by tending to the needs of others as the guardian of a guesthouse for girls who have been (temporarily) separated from their families. 'Aunt' Sara's orphaned status places her on a par with her wards. These include a Eurasian girl, Lili, who conforms to the stereotype of Eurasian womanhood (characterised by, among other things, impulsiveness, a lack of self-control and not being as good as her word) to a considerable extent. Nevertheless, Lili proves to be highly capable of developing herself, with the result that she entertains as close and warm a tie to her guardian as the white girls do. The positive flipside to Lili's impulsiveness is her warm heart. In this respect, she contrasts favourably to an upper-class white Dutch girl in Sara's boarding house, Mien. The burden of criticism falls on her, not on Lili, because of her incapacity for empathy and commiseration, which Lili possesses in abundance.²³ Cold-heartedness is portrayed as a far more serious moral deficit than impulsiveness here, as the latter turns out to be easier to repair than the former. Thus, high class and white skin are disconnected from moral superiority in this novel. Basically everyone is shown to be equally capable of moral excellence, once they grow aware of their own weaknesses, which is precisely what Mien's upper-class status prevents her from doing. Hence, she is the only one who does not really fit into 'Aunt' Sara's elective 'family'.

Brown nephews

Having looked at rules and exceptions in the literary representation of Eurasian child characters in the Netherlands, one might wonder whether this subgenre is a girls-only affair. Indeed almost, but not quite. The corpus also contains a few stories about Eurasian boys who are sent to the Netherlands for educative purposes.²⁴ These works differ from their feminine equivalents in nature and number. Around a quarter of the novels about children of colour who are displaced from colony to motherland feature so-called brown nephews (*bruine neefjes*). Their plot structure is considerably different on at least three counts.

First, the Eurasian boys are not sent to the Netherlands for the purpose of character reformation, but to receive secondary education, or,

23 One could say that the two negative images of Eurasian women/mothers – for instance the cold-hearted, egocentric stereotype and the impulsive, emotivist stereotype – are redistributed over an upper-class Dutch girl and a Eurasian girl here, which undercuts the racial underpinnings of these stereotypes.

24 In addition, colonial novels about the Dutch East Indies also tell stories about white boys and girls who move from the Netherlands to the colony or the other way around, to accompany their parents who either begin or end a period of service in the Indies. These stories fall outside the scope of this article.



▲
Left: Frans and Clara take a walk through the Dutch countryside, between pages 72 and 73; Right: Hendrik, Frans and Clara's family at the dinner table, between pages 84 and 85. There are no signs of ethnic difference whatsoever in the illustrations of Louise Ahn-de Jongh's *Goede kameraads* ([1898] 1900). Illustrations by Cornelis Koppenol. <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=mmkb11:000005149>.

incidentally, because they have lost all their relatives in the Indies and have, therefore, become dependent on their nearest of kin in the Netherlands. Second, while these novels also employ the rhetorical compare-and-contrast strategy featuring pairs of white and brown cousins of roughly the same age, this comparison is never to the detriment of the brown character. The nephews of colour prove themselves at least equal, and in some cases even superior, to their white counterparts. Finally, the endings of these two groups of works differ. The stories about the so-called brown nieces remain rather inconclusive, as they return to the Indies around age sixteen or embark on a career as a schoolteacher or governess. These novels are rarely concluded by a marriage, apart from two exceptions. The final passage of *Bruintje: Een verhaal voor meisjes* hints at an emerging romance between white Gerard and Eurasian Gonda, while the main character in *Nonnie Dorsvliet* (1913) ends up marrying a promising doctor, Louis Welters, who is Eurasian, as she is. The novels about brown nephews, however, conclude with a classical happy ending, as they end up marrying their white nieces – a sure sign of their successful ascent on the social ladder.

Goede kameraads ([1898] 1900) is a case in point, narrating the coming of age of the Eurasian boy Frans, whose white niece Clara, an energetic, athletic and ambitious tomboy, serves as a counterpoint. Frans and Clara attend the *Hogere Burgerschool* together, which was rather exceptional for girls at the time. There is also a *Dritte im Bunde*, their Dutch friend Hendrik. Frans's father ardently wishes for his son to become a doctor, making considerable financial sacrifices for his preparatory secondary education. Frans, however, has a passion for music. His ambition is to pass the entrance exam for the School of Music, to become a violinist. He shares this dream with Hendrik. The two boys support each other through thick and thin as they face the challenge of obtaining their high school diploma and qualifying for the entrance exam together. Thanks to their determination and mutual support, they pull it off. All throughout this demanding process, Frans does not experience any difficulty in blending in with his all-white environment. The only reminder of his alleged racial otherness is his one and only weakness. Frans has a melancholic streak to his character, which he has supposedly inherited from his Javanese mother, but the other side of this coin is his artistic talent, which is also attributed to her. Just like his niece Clara, Frans is portrayed as something of a gender-bender, in that both his melancholy and his passion for music carry feminine connotations, but his perseverance and ambition prevent his feminine sensitivity. This eventually culminates in the reward of marriage to Clara.

The novel *Blank en bruin* ([1902] 1912, *White and Brown*) opts for a different strategy for tailoring Eurasian boys to the role of literary hero by adding elements of adventure. *Blank en bruin* narrates the downfall of the aristocratic family Van Dintelburg, beginning with the two male heirs, Louis and Willem, who personify the wide and the narrow moral road, respectively.

Materialistic Louis is bent on gathering riches as he moves from old to new money by founding a factory, while Willem heeds his spiritual vocation of becoming a missionary in the Dutch East Indies. Willem marries an indigenous woman, who gives birth to a son, Leo, while he extends his family further by adopting a young indigenous man, called Bamboe. Willem converts Bamboe to Christianity, and the latter becomes his most loyal and devoted disciple. Sadly, Leo is orphaned at the tender age of nine. Willem's will expresses the wish that Bamboe becomes Leo's guardian – thus keeping his son out of the hands of the worldly Louis – and that the two of them will travel overseas to be reunited with their Dutch relatives. Upon arrival, Leo meets up with his cousin Rudolf, Louis's son. This is where the moral contest between *blank*/white and *bruin*/brown begins.

Since Rudolf and Leo take after their fathers, their lives unfold with almost naturalistic²⁵ predictability. Rudolf increasingly derails in a self-seeking life of dissipation and debauchery, up to the point at which he even jeopardises the Dintelburg industrial empire, forcing his father to take leadership of the factory out of his hands, passing it on to Leo. Rudolf is sent packing as a soldier in the Dutch East Indies army, in the hope that he will acquire some discipline and self-control there. Leo, in the meantime, decides to tread in his father's footsteps by becoming a missionary in the Dutch East Indies, renouncing the mundane quest for profit. Coincidentally, their paths cross again in the tropics. Leo saves Rudolf's life on the battlefield of the Aceh war, while Rudolf was about to sacrifice his in a brave attempt to protect his general, which is Rudolf's first altruistic deed ever and a turning point in his life.

The two return to the Netherlands together to take on joint leadership over the factory, which is renamed 'Blank en bruin'. Leo is now ready to reap the reward of an advantageous marriage to Rudolf's sister, combining the privileges of old and new money in his person. Finally, Rudolf abandons his hedonistic lifestyle, but there remains a price to pay. Rudolf has not only lost a limb on the battlefield, but he has also squandered a part of his soul, the narrator points out. The memories of his numerous sins hang over him like a shadow that he can never quite dispel: true joy and happiness are no longer accessible to him.

In a striking reversal of roles, one could say that Rudolf has finally become almost white/but not quite, while Leo has proved himself to be whiter than snow all along. Thus, the stories about brown nephews extol the virtues of honesty, courage, ambition, determination and self-sacrificial altruism – virtues in which the Eurasian boys are shown to excel. These rare novels clearly allow for much greater variation in gender roles and racialised positions than the stories about brown nieces. If we compare the

25 This epithet references literary naturalism, which explored the workings of heredity in shaping human character and behaviour through the

novel form, with Émile Zola, Theodore Dreiser and Louis Couperus figuring as prime examples of naturalist authors.

two collections of stories, one is inclined to conclude that having the ‘wrong’ colour is less of a liability than having the ‘wrong’ gender.²⁶

Genre

It is remarkable that narratives about brown nieces vastly outnumber those about brown nephews for in actual practice it must have been the other way around. If Eurasian boys were acknowledged by their Dutch fathers, they would become subjects of the Dutch state, which implied access to higher education. The latter was a much-prized good, because only secondary education through *gymnasia* and *hogere burgerscholen* would give pupils access to the *grootambtenaren examen* (higher civil service exam). A secure position in the colonial administration was an attractive career option for Eurasian males. Therefore, wealthy families with mixed sons who had attended the European Primary School ELS (where Dutch was the language of instruction) had built up a tradition of sending their sons to the Netherlands for higher secondary education.²⁷ This practice was no longer strictly necessary after 1864, when a special civil service school was founded in Batavia, with other institutions for higher secondary education following suit. However, the perception still prevailed among Dutch colonial administrators, as historians Ulbe Bosma and Gijsbert Oonk demonstrate, that it was preferable to send your sons to the motherland:

The colonial policy continued to centre on the notion that Europeans in executive positions in the Dutch East Indies must be steeped in the culture of the mother country. Dutch people born in the East Indies had, as it were, first to be purged of the local environment before they could be allowed access to senior posts in the colonial administration and industry.²⁸

26 The depiction of these Eurasian boys manifests a sharp divergence from the ways in which Eurasian males are portrayed in Dutch colonial literature at large. According to Boudewijn in *Warm bloed*, they are set down as sexual predators, prone to dissipation and debauchery, and much closer to animals than white men. Clearly, the portrayal of Eurasian boys in the corpus under study is remarkably positive. This goes to show that children’s literature is to some extent a literary system in its own right.

27 After the foundation of the Koning Willem III Gymnasium in Batavia in 1864, other Hogere Burgerscholen followed suit in Soerabaja and

Semarang in 1875 and 1878. In 1882, a shortened, three-year-track Hogere Burgerscholen for girls was also founded in Batavia. See Jan Lelyveld, “‘Opvoeding tot autonomie’: Fictie of werkelijkheid? Koloniaal onderwijs en zorg van de staat in Nederlands-Indië van 1801 tot 1949’, *Jaarboek voor de Geschiedenis van Opvoeding en Onderwijs* 3 (2002) 204-220.

28 Ulbe Bosma and Gijsbert Oonk, ‘Bombay Batavia: Parsi and Eurasian Variations on the Middlemen Theme’, in: Nico Randeraad (ed.), *Mediators between State and Society*. Publikaties Faculteit der Historische en Kunstwetenschappen 29 (Hilversum 1998) 17-41.

Historian Liesbeth Rosen Jacobson points out that educational opportunities for indigenous people increased as an effect of the Ethical Policy around 1900, meaning that they could now compete with Eurasians over lower civil service positions and menial jobs in the service industry. This intensified the need for Eurasians to mimic European ways even more closely to secure their precarious niche in the higher echelons of the job market. An effective way to do so was to spend a formative period in the motherland, as Rosen Jacobson argues:

(...) the criteria for 'Europeanness' were not the same everywhere. Education in the mother country was an often-heard criterion in the guidebooks, such as *Het Indische leven* in 1927. (...) Going to a secondary school in the Dutch East Indies was seen as a recipe for 'verindischen', a process of degeneration through which people lost their European characteristics.²⁹

However, Europeanisation was a costly endeavour, given the lengthy journey and the costs of room and board. This investment would pay off in the end if it could secure a good career. No such return on investment was possible for Eurasian girls, who had to go for the traditional female professions if they aspired towards a career at all. Therefore, Eurasian girls were hardly likely to be sent to the Netherlands for the mere purpose of character reformation.

One may, therefore, conclude that Eurasian boys are under- and Eurasian girls over-represented in these novels about child mobility between the Dutch East Indies and the Netherlands, if one judges them by realistic standards.³⁰ The ways in which the novels discussed differ from each other and from their socio-historical context cannot be explained by assigning them to different 'pillars' in Dutch society. Their authors were predominantly non-denominational females who supported themselves with their writings, with Protestants following suit as the second largest category, while Catholic authors constitute a minority of two. Louise Ahn-de Jongh's book *Goede kameraads* first appeared in the Sixty Pennies Library (*Zestig-Cents bibliotheek*), which published novels catering to both boys and girls, spearheaded by the feminist and revolutionary liberal Titia van Tuuk. *Blank en bruin*, however, which expresses comparable ideas about the hierarchies of race and class, was written by a Protestant. Marie Carolina Frank, who allows class to trump race in *Bruintje*, was a non-denominational, modern, self-supporting woman, while Clémence Bauer, who extols the virtues of a Eurasian girl over those of her white friend in *Twee Adri's*, was a Catholic.

29 Liesbeth Rosen Jacobson, 'The Eurasian Question': *The colonial position and postcolonial options of colonial mixed ancestry groups from British India, Dutch East Indies and French Indochina compared* (Hilversum 2018) 97.

30 This under-representation is all the more remarkable if we consider that boy characters were extremely popular in bestsellers for both adults and children at the time. See Erica van Boven, *Bestsellers in Nederland 1900-2015* (Antwerp/Apeldoorn 2015) 71-72 and 89-93.

Perspectives from genre studies are of greater use in explaining why and how the literary geography of colonial childhood seems to have taken on a life of its own here. Genre is about recurrent plot structures, character types, themes and motifs which guide the production and reception of literary works. For authors, genres constitute sets of enabling constraints for matching content to form. Authors may adjust such templates to their own purposes up to a point, but they can never ignore them completely, as they delineate the ‘horizon of expectations’³¹ for readers, guiding their responses to the literary work. Genres provide a common meeting ground between authors and readers, enabling literary communication. Meaning and significance are created in the ways in which authors conform to and depart from genre conventions. Rhetorical genre studies approach genres as symbolic social action – that is, as configurations of recurrent social situations (for instance the formative stay in the Netherlands) and exemplary ways of acting upon them (such as adjusting to ‘white ways’). As symbolic social action, narrative fiction dispenses a large number of scripts such as child-rearing scripts, coming-of-age scripts, courtship scripts, family formation scripts, acting-your-age scripts.³² They showcase exemplary forms of social behaviour, telling their readers what to do in which situations.³³

The collection of novels about Eurasian girls in the Netherlands is shaped by a literary genre that dominated narrative fiction for girls during the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, namely coming-of-age stories featuring adolescent tomboys in the leading role.³⁴ The prime example of this character type in Anglophone girls’ fiction is Jo March in Louisa May Alcott’s

31 This term was coined by Hans-Georg Gadamer as a key concept of his hermeneutic theory. His pupil Hans-Robert Jauss, the founding father of reception history, transferred it to historical inquiry into readers’ responses to literary works.

32 Carolyn R. Miller, ‘Genre as social action’, *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 70:2 (1984) 151-167. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00335638409383686>. See also Sonja K. Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice* (Long Grove 2009), and Susan G. Strauss and Parastou Feiz, *Discourse Analysis: Putting Our Worlds into Words* (New York 2014) 49-99. For the role of genre in children’s literature, see Perry Nodelman, *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children’s Literature* (Baltimore 2008) and Kimberley Reynolds, *Children’s Literature: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford 2011) 1-6 and 77-96. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/actrade/9780199560240.003.0002>.

33 On the socialising functions of children’s literature, see John Stephens, *Language and Ideology in Children’s Fiction* (London 1992); Maria Nikolajeva, *Power, Voice and Subjectivity in Literature for Young Readers* (London 2010); Karen Coats, *The Bloomsbury Introduction to Children’s and Young Adult Literature* (London/New York 2017) 7-49 and 243-275.

34 Richard K. Ashford, ‘Tomboys & Saints: Girls’ Stories of the Late Nineteenth Century’, *School Library Journal* 26:5 (1980) 23-28; Gertrud Lehnert, ‘The Training of the Shrew: The Socialization and Education of Young Women in Children’s Literature’, *Poetics Today* 13:1 (1992) 109-122. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/1772792>; Michelle Ann Abate, *Tomboys: A Literary and Cultural History* (Philadelphia 2008).

Little Women (1869).³⁵ In Dutch, this novelistic genre is called *bakvisroman*³⁶, which is close to its German equivalent (*Backfischroman*).³⁷ Famous examples are *Der Trotzkopf* (1885) by Emmy von Rhoden³⁸, *Schoolidyllen* (1900) and *Een zomerzothed* (1927) by Top Naeff, and the *Joop ter Heul* novels (1919-1925)³⁹ by Cissy van Marxveldt.

The adolescent female gender benders in these classic girls' novels initially identify much more strongly with brothers and/or fathers than with mothers and/or sisters. They prefer roughing it with the boys in the outdoors to domestic chores in the family home, and they have high social aspirations, dreaming about careers as writers, musicians, or social workers. Their unruly behaviour is often described with a good sense of humour, but in the end, their wings are clipped, as they finally reconcile themselves to their place in society and vocation in life as wives and mothers.⁴⁰

Tomboy stories are usually set in the domestic sphere, but at times the heroines are taken out of their families by a period at boarding school or travelling across Europe and/or Europe's colonies.⁴¹ Such a break from their family of origin is usually a cure for their overly strong identification with their fathers. Tomboy stories unfold scripts for coming-of-age through contrasting pairs of characters, the as yet unadjusted tomboy versus the girly girl. The reader's sympathy is directed towards the tomboyish heroine in *fin de siècle* specimens, who suffers from one vice only, namely her as yet deficient femininity. Other than that, she is honest, straightforward

35 Translated into Dutch as *Onder moeders vleugels*.

36 The expression *bakvis/Backfisch* translates into English as 'tomboy'. For a characterisation of the Dutch *bakvisroman*, see Thesi Schmitz, 'Het "recept" van de klassieke meisjesboeken van Top Naeff en Cissy van Marxveldt: "Men neme een bakvis..."', *Jaarboek Letterkundig Museum* 10 (2001) 45-67.

37 See Gisela Wilkending, 'Mädchenlektüre und Mädchenliteratur: "Backfischliteratur" im Widerstreit von Aufklärungspädagogik, Kunsterziehungs- und Frauenbewegung', in: Bernd Dolle-Weinkauff and Hans-Heino Ewers (eds.), *Theorien der Jugendlektüre: Beiträge zur Kinder- und Jugendliteraturkritik seit Heinrich Wolgast. Jugendliteratur – Theorie und Praxis* (Weinheim 1996) 105-125. See also Dagmar Grenz and Gisela Wilkending (eds.), *Geschichte der Mädchenlektüre: Mädchenliteratur und die gesellschaftliche Situation der Frauen vom 18. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart* (Weinheim 1997).

38 Dagmar Grenz, "'Der Trotzkopf": ein Bestseller damals und heute', in: Grenz and Wilkending (eds.), *Geschichte der Mädchenlektüre*, 115-122. The novel was translated into Dutch as *Stijfkopje*.

39 Cissy van Marxveldt, *De H.B.S. tijd van Joop ter Heul* (Amersfoort 1919), Cissy van Marxveldt, *Joop ter Heul's problemen* (Amersfoort 1921), Cissy van Marxveldt, *Joop van Dil-ter Heul* (Amersfoort 1923), Cissy van Marxveldt, *Joop en haar jongen* (Amersfoort 1925).

40 Indeed, one could argue that these stories ultimately go back to the plot of William Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* (1590-1592), as Gertrud Lehnert suggests in 'The Training of the Shrew'.

41 Silke Kirch, 'Reiseromane und Kolonialromane um 1900 für junge Leserinnen', in: Gisela Wilkending (ed.), *Mädchenliteratur der Kaiserzeit: Zwischen weiblicher Identifizierung und Grenzüberschreitung* (Stuttgart 2003) 103-165. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-476-05256-8_4.

and sensitive to the needs of others. Moreover, she is resilient and knows how to cope with disappointment. While the tomboy is characterised by underdeveloped femininity, her sidekick, the girly girl, stands out because of her overdeveloped femininity, which proves to be the greater problem of the two. She is vain, obsessed with outward appearance and material things, completely self-centred, snobbish and *nerveus* (inflicted with overly excitable nerves).⁴² The girly girl does not have many friends and usually ends up marrying the wrong man or no man at all, while the tomboy is rewarded in the end by marriage to a morally upright man, who is sure to become a devoted father and reliable provider.

All this goes to show how conflicted a set of values femininity was around the turn of the century. Young women had to conform to this standard, but not too much, nor too little, turning the quest for the right measure of conformity into a daunting challenge. This ambivalence also explains the dominance of this particular genre on the literary scene for girls, as the genre pays lip service to the emerging phenomena of the 'New Woman and the New Girl'⁴³, condoning gender-inappropriate behaviour but containing it at the same time as a phase the heroine eventually grows out of.

I would like to contend that the stories about brown nieces capitalised on the popularity of the tomboy story. However, these could only be tailored to this template through a number of significant twists and turns. The narratives under study figure as coming-of-age stories within domestic settings, now centring on the development of a mixed, rather than an all-white girl. While the heroines in mainstream domestic novels are portrayed as deficient females, the brown nieces are put on the scene as deficient whites. The challenge for the tomboy is learning how to conform to femininity, while Eurasian characters grapple with the challenge living up to white middle-class norms, values and lifestyles. The formative period abroad becomes re-allocation to the Netherlands for them. Like the tomboy stories, the novels about brown nieces also pivot around a contrasting pair of characters, with the tomboy versus girly girl being replaced by the brown versus white cousin. However, the vices and virtues attributed to these contrasting pairs of characters shift significantly. The deficiencies associated with the girly girl are attributed to the brown nieces, but now these are not only gendered but also racialised as ineradicable traces of their Asian mothers. Their white cousins figure as rather bland versions of the character that is to engage the reader's sympathy. The story narrates the coming-of-age of the girl who is beset by vices and can therefore, predictably, never be fully redeemed.

42 Thesi Schmitz argues in 'Het "recept" van de klassieke meisjeboeken' that the bad girl conforms quite closely to portrayals of pathological, 'nervous' women in Naturalist novels for adults, such as Eline Vere or

Leonie van Oudijck in Louis Couperus's *Eline Vere* (Amsterdam 1889) and *De stille kracht* (Amsterdam 1900), respectively.

43 See Sally Mitchell, *The New Girl: Girls' Culture in England, 1880-1915* (New York 1995).

A final twist to the genre conventions of the tomboy story pertains to the absence of marriage. While tomboy stories feature high school girls, ending at the age at which they are old enough to become engaged to be married, somewhere between eighteen and twenty, the stories about brown nieces begin and end earlier, focusing on the formative period between nine and sixteen. Just before they reach a nubile age, they return to the Dutch East Indies or embark on a career, so the question of whether they will ever find a proper husband is left open, in keeping with the modest success of their character reformation.

Elaborating on the genre perspective outlined above, I would argue that brown nephews are under-represented in children's novels about Eurasian youth travelling from colony to metropole, because they slip through the net of the contemporaneous gendered youth literary system. Stories about Eurasian boys who go to the Netherlands for secondary education are inevitably tied down to domestic Dutch settings, and these carry feminine connotations. Attuning such stories to the conspicuously feminine genre of the *bakvisroman* is a risky endeavour, since this is bound to destabilise the gendered and racialised hierarchies on which the genre is premised, as becomes apparent from *Goede kameraads* and *Blank en bruin*. The former largely conforms to the plot structure of the tomboy story, including the romantic ending, but the rather feminine main hero who nevertheless succeeds gloriously in society contests both male and white supremacy. *Blank en bruin* blends elements of the tomboy story (most notably the contrasting pair of characters and the romance ending) with the missionary story and the adventure novel, genres which catered to boys. Adventure stories unfold in the exoticised setting of the Dutch East Indies. The missionary story⁴⁴ extols the successes of missionaries in converting indigenous characters, especially young boys. Missionary and adventure stories are a lot more eventful than the confining domestic stories that catered to girls. They offer its main characters a wide action radius, narrating gripping episodes of violence and manslaughter, kidnapping and child trafficking, while disseminating a plethora of information about Indies flora, fauna, history and geography in the process. Missionary stories groomed boys for an overseas career teaching them that they could make a real difference by going to the Dutch East Indies.

Adventure stories are usually about white boys who have to fend for themselves in the jungle, as a way of teasing out their courage, self-reliance and pluck – characteristics required of the future rulers of empire.⁴⁵

44 Anthony Kearney, 'The Missionary Hero in Children's Literature', *Children's Literature in Education* 14:2 (1983) 104-112. For a discussion of some Dutch missionary stories for boys, see Elisabeth Wesseling and Jacques Dane, 'Are "the Natives" Educable? Dutch Schoolchildren

Learn Ethical Colonial Policy (1890-1910), *Journal of Educational Media, Memory, and Society* 10:1 (2018) 28-44. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3167/jemms.2018.100103>.

45 Lerer, *Children's Literature*, 151-171.

Blank en bruin blends these three genres, with the main characters to-ing and fro-ing between the Dutch East Indies and the Netherlands, while engaging in warfare and the conversion of the ‘natives’. This makes for an exciting story, but unsettles the conventional hierarchy between ‘blank’ and ‘bruin’ in the process. Gender and genre, narrative patterning and ideology shape each other and cannot be mixed ad libitum without subverting value hierarchies, which might not have been what mainstream authors intended. Therefore, Eurasian boys in the Netherlands were less suitable for this type of fiction than their female counterparts.

Tensions of empire

I have discussed the ways in which children’s novels about Eurasian girls and boys differ from each other and from contemporaneous pedagogical practices. The purpose was to analyse how the prisms of popular literary genres deflected the representation of colonial practices towards specific types of symbolic social action, providing points of entry into mindsets of the past. While specific sets of values do emerge from the ways in which the novels discussed juggle the hierarchies of race, age, class and gender, their internal incongruities also reveal that colonial discourse was not a logical, homogeneous or coherent discourse that can be sorted into clear-cut binary oppositions between the dominated and the dominant, as Kirsten Kamphuis⁴⁶, Marit Monteiro⁴⁷ and Geertje Mak⁴⁸ also observe in their contributions to this special issue.

Stories about brown nieces may have instilled a sense of racial superiority in white female readers, as they learned that Eurasian girls were morally inferior and incapable of competing with them on the Dutch marriage market as such. Meanwhile, these same readers were also exposed to highly conflicted notions of femininity as something to strive after but also inherently inferior, meaning that one could never get it quite right, brown or white. Strikingly, Eurasian boys are exempted from the odium inflicted on their female counterparts, as they are fashioned as highly suitable marriage partners for white girls. Thus, the novels discussed do

46 Kamphuis, ‘An Alternative Family’.

47 Marit Monteiro, ‘Colonial Complicities: Catholic Missionaries, Chinese Elite and Non-kin Support for Chinese Children in Semarang During the 1930s’, *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review* 135:3/4 (2020) 158–183. . DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18352/bmgn-lchr.10875>.

48 Geertje Mak, ‘Children on the Fault Lines: A Historical-Anthropological Reconstruction of the Background of Children purchased by Dutch Missionaries between 1863 and 1898 in Dutch New Guinea’, *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review* 135:3/4 (2020) 29–55. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18352/bmgn-lchr.10876>.

not only illuminate mainstream values, but also the bandwidth of variation in value patterns. Some reveal that it was not everyone's inescapable fate to be racist, but ethnocentrism does seem to have been paramount at the time. Whether the Eurasian characters are depicted as superior, inferior or equal to the white characters, in all cases the standard is set by the purported values of Dutch culture. Honesty, thrift, diligence, loyalty, stamina, discipline, working hard and getting ahead are the values that determine every character's worth, while there is no reference whatsoever to the possibility that other cultures and societies might cherish other values. Hence, these novels all express an imperialist mindset, no matter how well intentioned – that is, anti-racist and humanitarian – some of them might have been. It was proud, Dutch, white, middle-class morality that established the norm for character formation and legitimised the ongoing disruption of indigenous and mixed family ties, before national pride in the moral betterment of non-European nations faded into shame and obsolescence in the post-war era.

Appendix: primary works

Dutch children's novels about brown nieces (*bruine nichtjes*)

1. Pieter Jacob Andriessen, *Het Heidebloempje: Een verhaal uit onzen tijd, voor meisjes* (Amsterdam [1880, 1887] 1896).
2. Marie Carolina Frank, *Bruintje: Een verhaal voor de jeugd* (Amsterdam [1884]). Reprinted in 1910 as *Bruintje: Een verhaal voor meisjes*.
3. Marie C.E. Ovink-Soer, *Frieda en Kitty Sanders: Twee verhalen voor jonge dames* (Rotterdam 1884).
4. Marie Carolina Frank, *Blank en bruin: Een nagelaten roman* (1893).
5. J.M. Schaap, *Twee jaar op den Rozenhof: Verhaal voor meisjes* (Leiden [1894] 19xx).
6. Thérèse Elisabeth Hoven, *Nonnie en andere verhalen* (Tiel 1895).
7. Tine de Kruyff-Gobius, *Het Indische nichtje* (Amsterdam 1900).
8. Top Naeff, *De Tweelingen* (Amsterdam 1901).
9. Thérèse Elisabeth Hoven, *Tante Stanny* (The Hague 1904).
10. Elisabeth de Heer, *Het Oostersche nichtje: Een paaschverhaal* (Nijkerk 1909).
11. Augusta van Slooten, *'t Pension van Tante Saar* (Amsterdam 1909).
12. Nannie van Wehl, *Vooruitgestuurd* (Amsterdam 1909).
13. Nannie van Wehl, *Do en Lo Verster* (Meppel 1910).
14. Miep Smelders, *Nonnie Dorsvliet: Het leven van een Indisch meisje in Holland* (Amsterdam 1913).

15. Lina Tervooren, *Mia van Randwijck* (Amsterdam 1913).
16. Mary van Loon, *Het geheim van het oude huis* (Amsterdam 1914).
17. Marie C.E. Ovink-Soer, *De Canneheveltjes in Holland* (Gouda [1915] 1919, 1929).
18. W. Blomberg-Zeeman, *Nonnie* (Arnhem [1917] 1923).
19. Marie C.E. Ovink-Soer, *Puck* (Gouda [1917] 1928).
20. Lina Tervooren, *Toetie Roetmop* (Amsterdam 1917).
21. Annie de Graaff-Wüppermann, *Roetmop* (Nijkerk 1920).
22. Marie C.E. Ovink-Soer, *Hoe Puck 'n Canneheveltje werd* (Gouda [1920] 1927, 1928).
23. Marie C.E. Ovink-Soer, *Huize Canneheuvel (De "Duiventil")* (Gouda [1922] 1927).
24. Tine Ophof-Sterk, *Morgennevelen* (Weltevreden 1923).
25. Blanche M.J. Caron, *Een Indisch meisje en andere Indische verhalen* ('s Hertogenbosch 1925).
26. Clémence M.H. Bauer, 'Baboes kind', in: Marie C.E. Ovink-Soer (ed.), *Zonneschijn en andere verhalen* (Utrecht 1927) 56-64.
27. Clémence M.H. Bauer, 'Zonder moeder', in: Marie C.E. Ovink-Soer (ed.), *Pikoe Matti en andere verhalen* (Utrecht 1928) 598-609.
28. Marie C.E. Ovink-Soer, 'Nonnie en haar baboe', in: *Pikoe Matti*, 666-682.
29. Clémence M.H. Bauer, *De passagiers van de blauwe tram* (The Hague 1929).
30. Clémence M.H. Bauer, *Twee Adri's* (The Hague 1929).
31. Tine Langerhorst, *Gravinnetje* (Rotterdam 1929).
32. E. Chits-Rosen, *Zonnekind* (s.l. 1930).
33. Mia Smelders, 's *Levens lentetijd: Vervolg op 'Moderne bakvischjes'* (The Hague 1930).

Children's novels about brown nephews (*bruine neefjes*)

34. Louise Ahn-de Jongh, *Goede kameraads* (Deventer [1898] 1900).
35. Christine Doorman, 'Een Indische jongen', in: Christine Doorman, *Appelbloesems: Schetsen voor jongens en meisjes* (Utrecht 1891).
36. F.A.W. Jaeger, *Reinout* (Groningen 1902).
37. Hilbrandt Boschma, *Blank en bruin* (The Hague [1902] 1912).
38. H.W. Sonnega, *Henk en Bert: Avonturen van twee Indische jongens op de reis en in Holland* (Arnhem 1922).
39. Marie Koopmans, 'n *Indisch student in Holland: Verhaal voor jongens* (Utrecht/Amsterdam 1928).
40. Annie Heijermans-Jurgens, *De club der onafscheidelijken* (Amsterdam 1929).
41. Nicolaas Karel Bieger, *Flips Indische lotgevallen* (Alkmaar 1930).

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